

Paper Proposal AHSRA 2018

A Significant Shift in the Use of Resources Around the Years 1960 and 1980 in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Australia and the United States

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A title and one page (250-500 words not including title and names) summary of the presentation.

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Between 1900 and 1960 the number of ordained Seventh-day Adventist ministers in Australia, New Zealand and the North American Division followed a natural growth curve. But between 1960-1970 and the two decades following 1980, the number of ordained pastors remained relatively constant, despite growth in tithe receipts and membership. This data represents a significant shift in the resources of the church, and this paper explores the possible factors that would lead church administrators to be disinclined to expand the ministerial workforce during the decade of the 1960s and the period following 1980.

Earlier work by the author on tithing patterns revealed that while tithe increased in every year since 1960, that this increase hides an underlying weakness in the church receipts. Tithe increased, but not as fast as wages in the general population and ministerial wages. This was compensated somewhat by the increase in church membership, but budgetary considerations would mean that church administrators were less able to expand the ministerial work force than if tithe receipts had followed the increase in wages more closely. Other factors also brought pressure to bear on budgets. For example, in Australia and New Zealand government funding of private schools allowed a significant expansion of the Adventist school system, but even though the church's contribution to this expansion was dramatically reduced, this expansion still generated urgent needs for funding. In the 1980's, these budgetary pressures occurred at a time when the church in Australia, New Zealand and the United States was facing three issues above those usually experienced in administering the complex human organization which is the church:

(i) the examination of the core doctrine of 1844 and the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary accessioned by the examination of Des Ford's ideas; (ii) a challenge to the integrity of Ellen G. White growing from the charges of plagiarism against her by Walter Rae, and (iii) the loss of church funds brought about by the collapse of the investment scheme promoted by Donald J. Davenport and the involvement of key Church administrators in hard-to-justify special arrangements. Combined with budgetary constraints, these three issues created uncertainty in the church which in turn created an environment in which Church administrators would be reluctant to further expand the ministerial work force. Curiously enough, the growth in the numbers of ordained ministers in other parts of the globe (e.g. the British Union) seems to follow a different pattern, and the number of ordained ministers has continued to grow during the period from 1960 to the present in many places.

A 50-word abstract suitable for printing in the final program.

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Between 1900 and 1960 the number of ordained ministers in Australia and the US followed a natural growth curve. Between 1960-1970 and following 1980 the number of ordained pastors remained relatively constant, despite growth in tithe receipts and membership. This paper explores possible reasons for this pattern.

A list of references/bibliography which includes some sources published within the past 5 years.

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[1915, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935, 1940, 1945, 1950, 1955, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010 Annual Statistical Reports of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists were also consulted.]

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